



Bitterroot National Forest

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NEWS RELEASE

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“National Outlook Predicts Early and Active Fire Season”

Hamilton, Montana, May 10, 2007 — The National Interagency Fire Center recently released its annual “Wildland Fire Outlook: May – August 2007” report which indicates the potential for wildland fire is above normal for lands encompassed by the Bitterroot National Forest, and neighboring areas in central Idaho and southwestern Montana. The report states, “fire potential is expected to be higher than normal across much of the Southwest and California, portions of the Great Basin, Northern Rockies, Northwest, Alaska and the Southeast.”

Produced by the Predictive Services division of the National Interagency Fire Center, three critical factors are used as indicators of fire potential for this outlook period, including drought, conditions that lead to an early fire season onset, and grassland conditions. All three of these factors support the potential for an early and more active fire season. Specifically, “Drought conditions are expanding and intensifying across large portions of the West and Southeast. Low snowpack, warmer than normal forecasted temperatures, and early snow melt over most of the West will likely dry out timber fuels, cause early green-up, and bring an early onset of fire season. And abundant new and carryover fine fuels across much of the West are expected to green-up and cure early, leading to an active and prolonged grassland fire season.”

The Bitterroot National Forest’s Assistant Fire Management Officer Rick Floch reviewed the report and affirmed that these findings are consistent with conclusions reached by others. “I have heard similar results from other sources. Our fire season will hinge on the amount of rain we receive in June and July but with the long term drought and global warming trend, we could be in for an active season again in 2007.”

The full report can be viewed online at http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/season_outlook.pdf.
For additional information, please contact Floch at 406-363-7186

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